

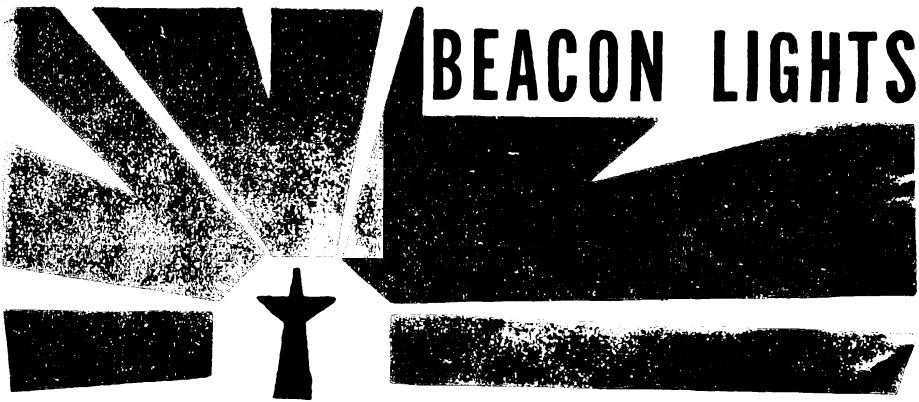
# BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT  
REFORMED YOUTH*



MARCH, 1980

A FARMER'S  
PRAYER DAY



# BEACON LIGHTS

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c/o O. P. Bookshop  
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All material for publication should be addressed

to: Dave Moelker 1401 Su-Lew S.W.

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

News Editor: Linda Kaiser

3364 New Castle S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508

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4190 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506

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## IN THIS ISSUE

|  |    |
|--|----|
| EDITORIAL - Another "E" Pistle to my Grandchildren - John M. Faber ..... | 1  |
| Faint not but BELIEVE - Agatha Lubbers .....                             | 4  |
| A Farmer's Thoughts on Prayer Day - Arthur De Jong .....                 | 9  |
| FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY - Samson - Rev. G. Lubbers .....                 | 11 |
| The Root of All Evil - Pete Koole .....                                  | 15 |
| News From, For and About our Churches - Linda Kaiser .....               | 18 |
| Index Volume 38 .....  | 19 |

# Another “E” Pistle To My Grandchildren

*by John M. Faber*

Dear Grandchildren:

It’s been a long time since I wrote to you, over a year, in fact. But every time I was about to do so someone beat me to it, and you know who that was; it was “Joe”. I notice that he has ended his story so I will use his space right here to insert my letter.

You remember Christmas Day when we all got together, and after that heavy meal, your old—I am so old I remember a time *before* there were any airplanes—grandpa dozed off in Aunt Ruth’s reclining chair? In my fitful dozing I remembered when I was a boy and how we amused ourselves sometimes. Our family lived on a farm and our fun was mostly farm fun. One time I was playing with a water hose letting the water trickle out real slowly, watching its course. Some of it quickly soaked in the soil, but the over supply began to seek its own level, as water always does, and it headed for the drainage ditch. It went this way and that way, meandering heedlessly, it seemed to me. But it wasn’t heedless at all. It met more firm dirt and was shunted to the left, and then it met other solid soil and it was shunted to the right. But at each turn that obstinate little rivulet got nearer to the ditch.

Later when I became older I learned in school that all streams and rivers meander on their way seeking the goal of their level. In my drowsiness I was trying to recall a Scripture passage which referred to that meandering action, but it eluded me.

In my semi-awareness I heard snatches of your conversation of which you were not aware, and I heard a couple of you cousins (I won’t mention any names) comparing experiences. One of you said that he and some classmates sneaked off in a car during a noon break, to a secluded place to smoke some “grass”. The way you told it and the way the other received it was with some whispered merriment. You really knew it was wrong for your parents had loudly denounced such action in other people’s kids; you knew you were violating a clear rule of the School Board and the expressed concern of your teachers. But I think you also knew a rule of Scripture was violated: that which speaks of your body being the living-in-place of the Holy Ghost, and that hurting your body is sinning against the Holy Spirit.

Then—I was almost sorry that I could hear it—you actually excused yourself by blaming God for that action! You were blaming Providence which governs all things, vegetation, animal life and the actions of man. Then one of the girls (shame on you, Mel—no, I wasn't going to mention names) said, "Providence made me steal some money out of my mother's purse yesterday" with a leering smirk. Then you, or your confidant, said, "What else can one do if it has been fore-ordained what is to happen? What is to be, shall be." Whew! One doesn't ever speak such rank fatalism in our family! But you did.

I know that your minister in his catechism class has made very plain to you the Scriptural relationship between God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility. I know that you have heard sound sermons on the Tenth Lord's Day of the Heidelberg Catechism, which deals with God's all-comprehensive providence; I know that your Bible teacher in school explained that relationship when you had the lesson of David's sin in counting the people of his realm. But you were talking as though you had never heard of it.

Then the forgotten Scripture text I mentioned earlier that had eluded my memory came back to me. It was Proverbs 21:1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, *as rivers of water*: He turneth them withersoever He will". The clear meaning of that Word of God is this: A king in those days was absolute monarch, having all power over his people. If he said, "Off with his head", his head was cut off. Pharaoh could release the butler from prison, and could have the baker hanged. Herod could order the execution of all baby boys under two years of age, and did. *And*, the heart of any man is the moral motor which moves him to act. *That* is what is in the hand of the Lord, *as rivers of water*, which the Lord turns which ever way He desires.

Now let's see if can relate this text to the problem of your responsibility when you sin.

1. Picture the gravitational force of water seeking its own level as the "inclination to all evil" which characterizes each of us as fallen in Adam.

2. Picture the circumstances (firmer places) which turn the direction of the stream as part of all the chain of circumstances which God's Providence includes.

3. None of the solid encumbrances of the stream's bank hinder the water in it's quest for water level. It goes relentlessly to its goal. The stream was merely shunted from side to side; its downward flow was in no way thwarted.

Now let's transfer that picture to our problem. II Samuel 24 relates the story of David's numbering the people. Verse one says that God was very angry with the people of Israel. He set out to punish them by sending a pestilence to kill 70,000 men. (verse 15) In verse 2 David, in his pride, orders Joab to take this census. He is such a great king now and wants to glory in the knowledge of his greatness, even to the exact number of his subjects. Then, in verse 10 he suddenly realizes his sin and confesses it. Do you see? Though God (verse 1) moved David to count the people, He did not violate David's own responsibility of his sin. David says, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done". (verse 10)

There are many more examples of such Sovereignty-Responsibility occurrences in the Bible. Acts 2:23 relates one of them. Peter is addressing the Jews, speaking of our Lord's death: "Him, *being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge* of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. And you may very well believe that in the Judgment Day the wicked reprobate, as they are sentenced to Hell, will not say "But how could we withstand Thy overruling power. We only did what was cut out for us to do." Oh, no! They will go to everlasting punishment with their guilt on their consciences forever!

Hence; all the chain of circumstances which bends our paths are of the Lord. All our actions regard to them belong to us. When the Devil tempts, our God tries our faith. Clear? You young people can quite easily understand all this. I know you can. But don't worry about the fact that you cannot comprehend it. God's works are usually un-comprehensible to us. He is infinite in all His works, we are finite. Even the most educated theologian cannot fully comprehend the relation of God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility. But *we do believe it*. We cannot comprehend God's knowledge of each falling hair from our head, but *we believe it*. Jesus, the Son of God, said so. Hebrews 1:3 tells us that all things are upheld by the Word of His power, so I guess Jesus knew what He was talking about. We had better hear him!

My, this letter is getting to be a regular epistle—it just goes on and on like an anniversary clock does without winding. So I had better sign off with the decision that I must have fallen asleep in that easy chair; I just couldn't have heard that fatalistic talk, at all; I must have dreamed it, I hope.

Love, Gramp

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It is of this same evil world that Christ says, "I pray not for the world." (John 17:9) He could not pray for it, for it was not given to Him. He did not die for it. It goes to destruction. That is why you must be very careful that you do not love that world. When you join hands with that world, have fellowship with it, sing with it, dance with it, make common cause with it, freely associate with it, partake of its pleasures and lusts, you must know that you become part of a world that is destined for destruction. For that world Christ does not pray. If you are of that world, He does not pray for you. Remember that when with the frequent question on your lips, "May I do this or that?" you play around the world as a moth flutters around the flame. Christ does not pray for Hollywood corruptions and the like. There is no fellowship of Him and Belial.

*God's Eternal Good Pleasure*  
Herman Hoeksema

# Faint Not but BELIEVE

## [Psalm 27:13-14]

*by Agatha Lubbers*

The students and faculty of Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the youth of the Protestant Reformed Churches in Michigan, particularly in the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, were suddenly cast into deep sorrow because of the sudden death of Richard Scott Miedema, son of Mr. and Mrs. Pete Miedema. (Pete is one of the Young Peoples Society leaders of Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church.) Rick was a member of the sophomore class of 1979-80. Rick died suddenly and unexpectedly in a snowmobile accident on Saturday, February 16, 1980.

The shock of seeing Rick die, the shock of the announcement of Rick's death, and the experience of seeing the body of Rick in the casket affected immensely each of the students and young people who knew Rick. The levels of the intensity of this shock and grief varied, however, because some knew Rick better and were therefore more emotionally distressed because of this experience. Six young men who are students at Covenant were the pallbearers at the funeral. Although others were not so emotionally disturbed by this experience, it did give them cause to pause and consider their own life. One student who was a member of the same basketball team with Rick said, "I think Rick's death taught everyone that old people are not the only ones who die." Another student writing more intimately about the experience said, "Rick's death taught me something—to take a look at my own life and to sort out the bad and plant the good."

As an expression of the love and concern that the students and faculty of Covenant Christian High School have for the family of Rick Miedema, the student council purchased a beautiful Thompson Chain-Reference Bible. On the blank pages beneath the covers of that Bible were written the words taken from Psalm 27. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."

It was my privilege and pleasure to be one of Rick's teachers. He was an energetic and enthusiastic young man. He was pleasant and evidenced that he loved God. I too grieve, but I grieve not as one who has no hope but as one who has hope for myself, for Rick and for our Covenant youth who love God. As a memorial tribute to my former student, Rick, and as a message of comfort to

the family and to all of our young people who knew him and loved him, I write this brief meditation.

The poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once wrote in “The Reaper and the Flowers” the following: “There is a Reaper, whose name is Death,/ And, with his sickle keen,/ He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,/ And the flowers that grow between.” In this short stanza Longfellow describes the grim reality of death that we with the psalmist David also observe. “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.” And it is grim when we experience it—particularly for those who are in the prime of life and more particularly for those who have so much hope for their children, who are the seed of the Covenant of God’s eternal promise of grace to thousands of those who love him.

Against death, called the last enemy in I Corinthians 15:26 (although it is a conquered and vanquished foe for the Christian), man constantly battles in the valley of the shadow of death in which we live the days of our Christian pilgrimage. It is therefore both divinely ironic and providentially fitting that during the very week of the death of our departed friend, fellow saint, and dear student, Rick was a member of the CPR classes (Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation) that would teach each student in the class how to give basic life support to a victim whose heart had stopped beating and who was no longer breathing. Three fellow students and friends of Rick had an opportunity to use their newly-acquired skills. They attempted to restore life to the heart of Rick by administering CPR—(It is reported that they did an excellent job too.)—but because of massive chest injuries and severe heart damage no matter how well CPR was administered Rick could not be brought to consciousness and his physical life could not be saved. The Lord who has our times in His hand said, “It is time for Rick to come to Me.”

Fifteen years ago I wrote an article for *Beacon Lights* (December, 1965). In the article, “What Must Be Taught About Death?” I observed, “It is decidedly true that the child cannot help but observe death. He sees it all around him. His pet dies. He observes the baby bird fall from the nest and die. He watches the flowers wilt, sees the petals fall to the ground, and then blow away. Each fall he witnesses the leaves turn brown, then fall to decay upon the ground. He may experience the sudden death of a brother, sister, mother, father, or friend.”

This has been the recent most poignant experience of the bereaved family and of us who knew Rick.

The terrifying thought of death causes natural man to be concerned with the reality and possibility of death at every level of his existence.

How do we Protestant Reformed teenagers, young adults, and more mature adults react to this reality of death? Should we join the nineteen-year old American poet William Cullen Bryant in his stoic meditation upon death and his romantic and humanistic trust in nature expressed in the poem, “Thanatopsis” (A Meditation Upon Death’). “...sustained and soothed by an



*unfaltering trust*, approach thy grave,/ Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

No, we do not place our trust in the immortality and eternity of nature nor in the inherent goodness of man, but we rest our case in the eternity of God’s grace. For this reason we faint not but believe. We say not merely as Tennyson said in his poem, “Crossing the Bar” “I *hope* to see my Pilot face to face/ When I have crossed the bar.” But we say with the assurance and confidence of faith as David said it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”

One young classmate wrote as follows: “God took one of His children away for a purpose to make us think a little and it does. It makes us think back on all the bad things we did and it makes us realize too that Christ died for the sins of us, His people. I am sure that if God did not take His children away we would not think about this. Some of us in fact are even scared to die, but we must have faith that if we do die we will be taken to heaven.”

Another classmate wrote: “I heard the news last weekend. It hurt me and everyone around me. It’s hard to believe. We say, ‘He was only sixteen years old, that’s too young to die.’ It really isn’t. It was in God’s plan right from the beginning. No ‘ifs’ about it. It wasn’t really an accident. It was His plan. That was the way God chose for him to die.”

Another sixteen-year-old classmate wrote: “I think the death of Rick shows us many things. It reminds us that we have to be prepared to die. We never know when we will die, therefore, we must be prepared and not take it for granted that we probably won’t die until we are older. We always know in the back of our mind that we might die young, but something like this brings us back to God. Even though this is hard to understand we know it was God’s will and His will is best. We must also pray to God for guidance through this time not only for us but for Rick’s parents and family. There will always be an empty spot in the home of Rick and the lives of the parents. Things the parents will see will remind them of Rick. The hardest part for them is still to come. During the last week, since Saturday night they were always busy and didn’t really have a chance to miss him, since they were at the funeral home and funeral. We must pray to God that He will comfort them and assure them that this is best. There will also be an empty spot in our life. He was a friend to everyone and he will be missed because he will no longer be at school. His desk will be empty. This is something nobody will forget. Since I went to school with him for eleven years, I will not forget him.”

Such outpouring of genuine grief and concern could cause one to sink into despair. One could curse God and die or one could assume an attitude of stoic indifference. One could express a hope in the ultimate goodness of humanity and indestructibility of nature. None of these are the Christian’s hope.

The great Mystery of Godliness is the legacy of the Christian in all of his activities—in his living and in his dying. (cf. I Timothy 3:16) It is the Mystery of Godliness revealed centrally in the manifestation of God in the flesh, Christ



our Messiah, that gives us grace to believe, to understand, and thereby to know that although death is not our friend, as the romantic poets would want us to believe, death is not the end. Death need not be proud. Death is swallowed up in victory. In life but also in death we can say with the assurance of faith that we belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the Mystery of Godliness.

With the poet John Donne we not only say "Death thou shalt die!" but "Death thou art in reality dead!" Christ has killed you Death. Death has been swallowed up in the victory of Christ over Death, and the grave. Just read the message of the great apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15. Let this be your song in the night of sadness!

Say with Paul and say through the Holy Spirit that you count that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the far greater glory that shall be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18) We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us and gave Himself for us. (Romans 8:37).

We are often justifiably dumb in experiences such as these. One of Rick's classmates wrote, "The death of my classmate and friend, Rick Miedema, has taught me a great deal. I am now trying to prepare myself for the day in which I too shall go. I did not tell Mr. and Mrs. Miedema this because I could not speak. I tried to though."

At times like these we echo David, the sweet-singer of Israel, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand." In these experiences we sing with profound agonizing before the throne of mercy and with indescribably great joy through our tears, as we did at the funeral, "I have followed truth and justice; Leave me not in deep distress; Be my help and my protection, Let the proud no more oppress. For Thy word and Thy salvation, Lord, my eyes with longing fail; Teach Thy statutes to Thy servants, Let Thy mercy now prevail."

We sing with a paradoxical but a true awareness of the goodness of God. "Affliction has been for my profit, That I to Thy statutes might hold; Thy law to my soul is more precious than thousands of silver and gold."

As family and friends, who have lost the physical presence of Rick, we have gained much. We have a more certain and indestructible hope worked in us by the Holy Spirit. It is exactly through experiences such as these that God in His great wisdom and sovereign grace works the reality of this hope. The Devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh will always militate against this hope and will always attempt to tarnish it. But we say with the psalmist David who spoke from the midst of great sorrow and seeming defeat, "Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

We all who with body and soul for time and eternity belong to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ have been taken through the crucible of affliction and distress and we have come out refined as gold. What great comfort we find in repeating the words of Psalm 16 (my favorite Psalm among many) "The lines

are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: I have set the LORD, always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

A student wrote: “But I know he is happy where he is right now and he would never want to live back down on earth again.” Another wrote, “We may cry and feel our sorrow for Rick’s death and feel our sorrow for Rick’s family, but we also must look at the fact that he is the most happy of us all. We may not wish for him to come back, like I did Saturday night.”

Instead we say with the firm confidence of faith, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”

To the Pete Miedema family and to all of us we say, “Wait on the LORD, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” (Psalm 27:13-14)

With renewed courage we take up the battle until we arrive on the shores of eternity, and we will be among those concerning whom the elder asked, “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?”

His answer was,

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters:

and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

Beloved, faint not but believe.

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And so God’s covenant is now the life of the friendship of God in Christ. In that covenant there are no offers and no conditions. The covenant is solely God’s. He establishes His covenant. He chooses and saves. He ingrafts us into Christ, and He sanctifies. He makes us friends of God for His name’s sake in the midst of the world. And He then also fights His own battle in us through Christ unto everlasting victory. And we are, through His grace, of God’s party. And when presently the battle has been fought, then He gives us, out of free grace, the crown of victory, a crown of life, a gracious crown.

Now that covenant of God is for us and our children.

*Believers and their Seed*

H. Hoeksema

# A Farmer's Thoughts On Prayer Day

*by Arthur De Jong*

Arthur De Jong is a member of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church.

Dear Readers of the *Beacon Lights*,

I received a note in the mail a while ago which asked me to write an article. Because I am a farmer, the note suggested that I write about "how a farmer deals with or prepares for Prayer Day." No one has ever approached me with this topic before but because I think it is a good one, I decided to try to stay with this topic. As I sit here and think about this, many thoughts come before my mind and I will try to put them into a reasonable form.

My first main thought is that we as people of God must not let go of this good practice of coming together on Prayer Day. It is true that Prayer Day is a day in the spring when we get together especially because the season for growing crops has arrived. It is also true that in today's world the sowing of crops is primarily the concern of a small percentage of people (although in my childhood days, most members of the church were farmers). But the Prayer Day services are for all of us, not just the farmer. Let me try to show why it is for everyone.

Prayer Day services are for all of us first of all just because they are a gathering together of God's people in worship. God's Word tells us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. This is true primarily of our Sunday worship services, where we regularly hear God's Word and are assembled for worship. But just as we desire to hear God's Word and to worship Him on Sunday, so also we look forward to the preaching and praise of God at other special services.

Coming together for worship on Prayer Day and other special days is a part of our spiritual heritage. My parents brought me up in the way of frequenting the Lord's house not only on Sunday but also on such special days as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Prayer Day. Our Church Order (in the back of our *Psalter*s) also calls the church to have services on various special days, and it mentions Prayer Day in its list. So this heritage is not just for farmers.

And then a third reason why everyone, not just farmers, should be at Prayer Day services is that the purpose for the service involves everyone. Although it is a meeting due to the season for planting, and although farmers are the ones who plant, yet everyone else also is involved in the concern of the planting season. Everyone has a need for the farmers' harvest to supply their

need of food. Further, everyone has a need that all their physical needs be met through God's blessing on their labor. And most importantly, everyone's essential need is not for physical things but for the spiritual. And so, we *all* belong at our planting season Prayer Day service.

My second main thought is that we must come to the Prayer Day service in a proper spiritual way. We must not look upon the Prayer Day service as a "gimme" service. In this service we rather pray to God for our daily bread (the necessities of life). We pray that we may have the strength to do our daily work. We do not demand anything of God but rather express our dependency on Him.

Farmers, being in agriculture, know that we are dependent on our God to send the sunshine and the rain for the crops to grow. We know also that we need the laborers to harvest them, and the markets and customers to buy and sell what we harvest. We must not think that we do this by our own strength and abilities. God must always be first! And so it is fitting and necessary that we begin the new season by calling upon God for His blessing.

The fact that God will bless our work makes our spring prayer service also a time for thanksgiving. Just think of it: "a sower goes out to sow". Would a farmer sow if he did not expect some results from his sowing? Of course not! But we believe the promise (which we find in Genesis) that there will be a harvest! "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." I believe that we as farmers should clearly see the relationship of seedtime and harvest. We plow the land, we fertilize the ground, we disc or drag the fields, we cultivate or rotovate it, and then we finally sow the seed into the earth. And as we do this work, we do it looking forward in faith to the harvest.

Amazing equipment is now available to do this work. In past years I remember doing this by hand, then later with horses, but today acres are put into crops in a short time! But even though man has such modern tools, the principle is still the same. The land must still be tilled (although we do hear of "no till" in our day). The seed must still be planted. And, all of our labor still depends upon God for the harvest.

As farmers we know not what seed will germinate and sprout. The seed bag may read "96% Germination" (or 94%, 92%—I've even seen them as low as 75%) and a farmer knows that to sow seed with a low germination is almost asking for a failure when you start.

Oh, the marvel of a seed! We place a radish seed (which is one of the vegetables we raise) into the earth. With the proper moisture and weather conditions, we can scratch the ground already the *next* day and find a sprout pushing the seed shell up! It continues to grow, soon emerging into view and grows until it reaches maturity.

Once again we can see (with those spiritual eyes that we have been given) a picture of the spiritual. God gives the seed life, just as He gives us life when we are regenerated by His Spirit. We are called out of darkness even as a seed is called out of the earth. God sows the seed every time His Word is preached.

There will come the harvest at the end of the world. Then the elect ones will be gathered in, saved through our Lord Jesus Christ who laid down His life that we are redeemed. And there will also be the other harvest as the sickle is thrust in for the crop of unbelievers. May we see what Jesus saw when He said, "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." May we follow His command to "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest."

We must be warned to hold fast to our good practice of Prayer Day services. Since by God's grace we believe all His promises, it is not formalism that we go to church on Sunday and on these special days. We go with joy in our hearts prepared to receive the blessings that God has in store for His people. We pray to be instructed from God's Word on what to believe, how to live. Because our sins have been taken away through our Savior's life and work, we now live and work till *the* harvest is complete.

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## ***FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY***

# **SAMSON, The Fallen and Restored Nazarite**

*by Rev. G. Lubbers*

"And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." Judges 16:28

When you read the Scriptural account of Samson, dear reader, you will not understand this judge in Israel except you believe that he too is numbered in

the “cloud of witnesses”, who believed that God is and that He rewards those who seek diligently! Samson served the purpose and plan of God in redemptive history, and then was taken up in the church of the firstborn in glory with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God is not ashamed to be called Samson’s God.

And we should not be ashamed of this great judge, who by faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and thus is mentioned in one breath with no less worthies than “David, Samuel and all the prophets....” Hebrews 11:32.

This all sounds rather strange when you read of Samson’s moral weakness in marrying a Philistine woman, committing adultery in Gath with a harlot, and succumbing to the wiles of Philistine women in the court of the great in Philistia. Nevertheless, let it be firmly held as true, that Samson served in the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, in his place, in Israel’s history of the Judges.

His birth was foretold to his parents, in Zorah, to Manoah and his wife. It was foretold in a time in Israel when there was no king, and when each did what was good in his own eyes. Shiloh, the place where God’s glory dwells is in disgrace under high priest Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. The glory is about to depart: Ichabod! And then there will be no resting-place for God’s Ark until it is brought by king David into the tabernacle in Jerusalem. Not in Shiloh but in Jerusalem shall be the Throne of God. The scepter shall be in Jerusalem, in Judah!

Yes, Samson’s birth is foretold. He shall be a Nazarite all his life, as were both Samuel and John the Baptist. He would be a living picture of what it means to be *separated* unto the Lord from all that is of sin and evil, separated unto the whole-hearted service and worship of the LORD. The *form* of this separation is Levitical cleanliness and holiness, as this is connected with the Old Testament tabernacle worship. Hence, he must be in Israel as a picture of what Israel is called of the LORD to be. Israel was a people, holy to the Lord. This was typified and expressed in the mitre of the High Priest’s forehead: *holiness to the Lord*. and this “holiness to the Lord” was expressed in the negative “no razor on his head, eating nothing that comes from the vine, and touch nothing which was dead”.

The “secret” of Samson’s strength was not in his strong muscles; it was not for Samson to make “the arm of flesh” his strength! The secret was that Samson walked by faith which conquers the world! The LORD blessed Samson in a very peculiar way.” “The Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan....” And the Lord lay the enemy low before him, so that one man would kill a thousand, be it then with the jaw-bone of an ass. (Judges 13:24,25; Deuteronomy 32:30) “How should one man chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except the Lord their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had delivered them up.” Here we find the “key” to understand the great victory of Samson over the Philistines, as a one-man army. One man and God is an overwhelming majority in the battle. Samson was not a “world’s strongest man”, but, in his weakness, the power of the Lord is perfected. Now

you understand it. Such is to be the case with every man of God, with every child of the Lord. And this strength is for all, who walk in spiritual Nazaritehood in Israel, trusting in the strength of the Lord. Such was the strength of a Samuel as well as of a John the Baptist.

It is in this strange history of Samson, that we see another aspect of the work of God. It is that salvation is of the LORD alone! God will magnify His power greatly in weakest means. And, O Samson was in every respect such a weak saint, such a sinful judge. In his weakness and sin we see the sin of Israel, who he judged, portrayed vividly. God's Nazarite people, a holy nation, a peculiar treasure, brought forth from the bondage of Satan's tyranny, is portrayed in Samson's Nazaritehood. However, Samson also portrayed the sins of Israel and the dire consequences of walking in sin, playing with this election of grace, trifling with their spiritual Nazaritehood. Samson was like Israel in every way. Of him it could *not* be said as a deliver "sin excepted", as the writer to the Hebrews says about the Son of God in our flesh. The redeemer-judge Samson needed a Redeemer-God.

And so we see that the real deliverance which Israel needed was to be *saved from sin!* That was typified in every sacrifice in the tabernacle at Shiloh. It was a picture and figure of the heavenly temple. (Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5) It is the Nazarite Samuel, who is given to Hannah, who will purify this house of the LORD, so that it may once more be such a picture of the heavenly. For the real delivering of Israel was a return to the old and tried paths, so that they might find rest for their souls. (Jeremiah 6:16; Matthew 11:29, 30)

And thus we are able to see Samson's fall from his Nazaritehood in perspective. He trifled with this being separated unto the LORD even as did backsliding Israel. That he committed harlotry was bad; it was a picture of the spiritual harlotry of Israel, who transgressed God's covenant in worshipping of idols, as well as its concomitant fornicating with the women in the gates of the temple. It was like the heathen orgies in their temples. Yes, it was bad enough what Samson did the night when he carried the gates of Gath to the top of a mountain. But what Samson does when he flirts with his secret of being a Nazarite, flagrantly trampling it under foot, is far worse! Little by little he falls into the snares of Satan, and, finally, he lays his head in the lap of that uncircumcized Philistine woman, Delilah. Like a bug around a hot lamp shade, Samson plays with the fires of the great Tempter, the murderer of man from the beginning, and he falls into the sin of not being a picture of Israel as a holy people unto the Lord.

The Lord humbles Samson. He becomes the meanest of slaves. He must be at the lowest end and strata of society in the world. (Compare Exodus 11:5; Isaiah 47:7.) His eyes are put out. His hair is shaven. He is in Gaza in prison, in the very city where he sinned as those sin, who worship in the temple of idols. (Romans 1:20-25) He sinned as the Gentiles who know not God. (I Thessalonians 4:4,5) What a humbled spectacle is Samson. He is a true picture of Israel and of all who sin in the church, and, who, under God's hand, are brought low.



Yes, he is the fallen Samson!

But God is faithful to His covenant. Samson is now a vessel of mercy in whom God will show the power of grace and loving kindness.

We do not know whether Samson was a praying man, a praying judge. This was evidently what he had not learned. He was not found on his knees with father Jacob in Pniel? I will not let thee go except Thou bless me. But this is the hour in which the great power of God will be perfected in Samson! He will conquer the world by faith. (I John 5:4,5) It is the God-ordained hour in Gaza to show that the victory over the foe is God. In Samson God will show that the implication of "takes captivity captive"! Samson's hair had once more grown. And Samson had considered his sin, and confessed it, no doubt. He had cried to the LORD from the depths. And the LORD had heard and forgiven. And so once more Samson is strong, not by some mighty movement of the Spirit, but by the deeper impulse of the inner man. The humbled Samson is lifted up. Thus would God lift up the humbled Israel, and restore both to their Nazaritehood holiness and be a separate people. They would learn the meaning of Moses' word, "Israel shall dwell in safety alone....a people saved by the Lord" (Deuteronomy 33:28,29)

And, now, hear him cry to God! O, Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee strengthen me. Only this once, Lord! May I be avenged by thee upon the Philistines for my two eyes. Take away all my shame. Let me leave this world in a blaze of glory, the glory of thy majesty in a faith which conquers the world, that the glory of being a Nazarite servant in the midst of a Nazarite people may be manifested in the defeat of all the nobles of Philistia!

And so Samson puts his arms about the pillars. God pulls down the entire arena of these Philistines; God makes His power perfected in Samson's weakness. Out of weakness he is made strong. (Hebrews 11:34) Samson *dies* to deliver Israel; he dies in the hope of the blessed resurrection. He is buried with his fathers in his inheritance, between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the burying place of Manoah his father.

And so Samson's name is blazoned in the pages of Scripture as one having a place in that great cloud of witnesses, that we may run the race unto victory in the midst of sins which do so easily beset us. (Hebrews 12:1)

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The Alumni Choir has cassette tapes of its December 16 program available.  
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# THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

*by Pete Koole*

Pete Koole is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.

Instant Cash! Instant Riches!! Buy a ticket for only a dollar....rub the surface with a coin....match up the same symbols, numbers, or designs and you too can be on your way to becoming independently wealthy for a life time.

Sounds very inviting, doesn't it? Have you ever fantasized what you would or could do with a million dollar lottery winning ticket?

The lottery, and the likes thereof, with their high stakes, are surely to be condemned. We do well to resist and abstain from participating in such gambling activities.

But what about what we sometimes consider to be only penny-ante stuff such as check pool, World Series pool, nickel and dime poker, etc? Principally, it falls in the same category, namely, gambling of one sort or another.

Allow me to recite in part Lord's Day 42, Question and Answer 110-111.

Question: What doth God forbid in the 8th Commandment?

Answer: God forbids not only those thefts and robberies....but He comprehends under the name of thefts all wicked tricks and devices whereby we design to appropriate to ourselves the goods which belong to our neighbor....whether by force or under the appearance of right....or any other way forbidden by God; as also all covetousness....

It is not for nought that we read in I Timothy 6:10, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." As is plain to see in this quotation from Scripture, the root of all evil is the love of money...the strong all-compelling desire to be rich...to be totally immersed in material goods. Thus, the love of money not merely signifies the sinful lust for gaining money in all possible ways; but also the deepest desire of keeping it for oneself or/and immediate family. Whoever thirsts after money and sets that up as his or her god, departs from the faith and pierces him/herself through with many sorrows. For if one gains the whole world and loses his own soul, what doth it profit him?

A man cannot be the slave of two masters, God and Mammon. Mammon is money. Money is a slave and not to be turned into a master that controls our desires and our thinking. We know from Psalm 73, the Lord sets the wicked in slippery places and He often does that through their prosperity; but much to our shame, we also have the strong inclinations at times to use the same sliding board.

Today the chief topic of discussion by the government through the media is inflation. What can be done to stop it? Relatively nothing, because of the unsatisfied greedy nature of man on all levels and in every department. It will devour him and destroy his economy and self-enterprise until a one world power sits on the throne to usher in the Anti-Christ. The average man views worldly goods in terms of money which is the means to obtain all other goods. Money is a symbol and its importance has a universal attachment. It is everything and it is nothing and worthless apart from its human context.

We live surrounded by our possessions. Not for long do we forget the enjoyment we derive from them...the attention our business may demand...the satisfaction its provides to our self-esteem in demonstrating our success to the world and to our fellow saint. Much worldly goods can make us boastful and materialistic minded.

Today more than ever, it is necessary for us as Christians to learn to detach ourselves from the worship of material things for their own sake. The tendency of the age is to instill the idea and concept that happiness consists in material goods and pleasure. It is our duty and obligation to combat that idea within ourselves, in our small children, and our young people. Constantly must we be reminded from the pulpits and from the printed page that our riches, our happiness, and our greatness are spiritual, not in the abundance of things.

As for the art of giving: Our human nature prefers to keep what we have and to part with as little as possible.

But we are faced with a divine law and scriptural principle which disturbs us because it has a different scale of value. But still we insist in asking ourselves, not how much we can give, but how much we may keep without violating the law and principle of giving liberally and cheerfully.

The life to which Christ calls us is a life of wholeheartedness, and wholeheartedness is incompatible with the constant calculation of the extent of our obligations. In practice, our natural man is calculating only when it is a question of giving. When it is a question of adding to our wealth, we succumb to every form of covetousness.

Talk about my wife, talk about my kids, but don't talk about my bank book.... It would be interesting to see what monies we could collect, say for a school drive, if everyone would just give from the interest on his or her saving accounts or the likes.

Consequently for all of us, the question is not—How much ought I to give? Am I giving enough? Such a question implies an attachment to worldly goods and a desire to hold on to as much as possible of them. The correct question to be asked is exactly the opposite. Am I obliged to hold on to my possessions?

How much ought I to keep?

In the language of theology, love of money is a serious sin because it separates the mind and heart from God.

For the first time in history, a comfortable standard of living is within the reach of all. In former days, luxury was enjoyed by the privileged few. The means of raising the general standard of living were limited in the extreme. Today life has been made more pleasant and easier by the means of mass production. Comforts have an irresistible attraction for all of us and sometimes we are obsessed to procure them. Maybe that's one reason so many wives and mothers are out working when they should be at home. That last remark is only an observation, not an accusation.

A Christian who cares for spiritual values and is concerned to be of use in the home, church, and school, will make use of monies and time not only for him or herself, but also for the promotion and well-being of others. Christ was accused both of worldliness and unworldliness. He loved the poor and did not refuse the hospitality of the rich.

In the Gospel, we meet rich men who are also good men whose wealth is not made a subject of reproach. At the very outset, we meet the wise men, persons of rank and wealth who brought their costly gifts as an offering to the infant Jesus. Among other rich men we might mention are Zacchaeus, and Joseph of Arimathea. Indeed, in everyday life Christ seems to take little interest in the question of riches...although at times He sharply rebuked those who put their trust in them. He mingled equally with the rich and poor and His judgment in each case is governed by the spirituality of individual.

Christ, as we know about Him and read concerning Him, was not a social reformer. He passes no judgment on the distribution of wealth...only that the poor widow gave more than they all who gave of their abundance. He does not criticize the establishment. He is not interested in condemning or reforming the structure of society. He speaks to the heart and soul of men. He takes society as it is and requires His disciples to serve God and separate themselves from the world. But He believed and taught that riches can be a hinderance to a godly life, for He said, where your treasure house is, there your heart is also.

---

**“Fear not ye:  
for I know  
that ye seek Jesus,  
which was crucified.  
He is not here:  
for He is risen,  
as He said.”**

# NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

*by Linda Kaiser*

## *BIRTHS*

Mr. & Mrs. Steve Kerkstra of Hope were blessed with the birth of a healthy son, Michael James, on January 11.

Mr. & Mrs. Eric Ophoff of First rejoice in the birth of a son, Eric James, on January 19.

Mr. & Mrs. Jim Vander Kolk were blessed with the birth of a son on January 26.

Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Griess of Loveland rejoice in the birth of a son, Luke Joseph, on January 25.

Mr. & Mrs. Charles Zandstra of South Holland were blessed with the birth of a baby girl, Jodi Michelle.

## *CHURCH MEMBERSHIP*

Faith has received the membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. David Dykstra and family from our Holland Church; Mr. & Mrs. Harvey Holstege and six baptized children from our Hudsonville Church; and Mr. & Mrs. Koning and one baptized child from our Southeast Church.

First Church of Grand Rapids has received the membership of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Hoeksema and baptized sons Stephen and Michael from our church in Hull; and Mr. Donald Knott as a baptized member from Dutton Christian Reformed Church.

## *YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES*

A Pancake and French Toast Breakfast was held at Hope School on January 12 sponsored by Hope's Young People. Proceeds were for the 1980 Convention.

A volleyball tournament was held on January 25 at Covenant High School between area Young People's Societies.

First Church's Young People sponsored a Mother-Daughter Banquet on February 8 at First Church.

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## *Leaving Father and Mother*

by Rev. C. Hanko

For your copy write to:

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# BEACON LIGHTS INDEX

## VOLUME 38

### March 1979 — January 1980

| Article   | Author   | No. | Page |
|---|----------|-----|------|
| -A-   |          |     |      |
| Attitudes Toward Covenant Instruction (ED)        | H.L.     | 4   | 1    |
| -B-   |          |     |      |
| Blessed Are Your Eyes                             | D.D.     | 8   | 3    |
| Blessed Confidence in Jehovah's Word (PS)         | R.G.L.   | 4   | 5    |
| Brotherly Love                                    | B.D.D.   | 8   | 7    |
| -C-   |          |     |      |
| Christian Courtesy (PS)                           | R.G.L.   | 1   | 4    |
| Christian Insurance Salesman, The                 | P.S.     | 3   | 9    |
| Christ's Command to Ask, Seek, and Knock (TVE)    | R.R.C.H. | 9   | 11   |
| 1979 Convention Host's Society Picture            |          | 4   | 25   |
| Convention of The Year, The                       | L.F.     | 2   | 19   |
| Convention Review                                 | C.V.B.   | 6   | 16   |
| CONVENTION SPEECHES                               |          |     |      |
| -In An Age Of Ignorance                           | R.M.K.   | 5   | 10   |
| -During The Sex Revolution                        | R.D.K.   | 5   | 14   |
| -In A Fun-Loving Generation                       | R.R.M.   | 5   | 20   |
| Convention Update                                 | D.Hu.    | 1   | 20   |
| -D-   |          |     |      |
| Dead Sea Video Tapes, The (CEC)                   | R.M.D.V. | 2   | 7    |
| Deborah   | M.P.D.   | 4   | 13   |
| Definition of Christmas                           | L.F.     | 8   | 20   |
| -E-   |          |     |      |
| Experiencing The Catholicity Of The Church        | M.M.     | 6   | 11   |
| -F-   |          |     |      |
| Faith Not of Man, But of God (TVE)                | R.R.C.H. | 2   | 13   |
| "Feed My Sheep" "But I Am Weak"                   | R.R.F.   | 4   | 11   |
| Fervant Prayers For Our Missionary-Ministers (PS) | R.G.L.   | 8   | 9    |
| From Here To There                                | C.M.     | 1   | 7    |
| From The Pastor's Study (Reprint)                 | R.V.B.   | 9   | 18   |
| Future For Families, A? (Crit)                    | B.W.     | 4   | 19   |
| -G-   |          |     |      |
| Giving Thanks In Adversity                        | R.R.F.   | 7   | 4    |
| God Looks On The Heart (Crit)                     | B.W.     | 1   | 14   |
| -H-   |          |     |      |
| Honor And The Promise (ED)                        | D.H.     | 6   | 1    |
| How Then Shall We Witness                         | F.Q.     | 5   | 4    |
| Hypocrite's Hope, The (TVE)                       | R.R.C.H. | 7   | 7    |

|   |     |          |   |    |
|---|-----|----------|---|----|
|   | -I- |          |   |    |
| I Am Joe (ED)   |     | J.M.F.   | 8 | 1  |
| I Am Joe's Foot (ED)  |     | J.M.F.   | 2 | 2  |
| I Am Joe's Heart (ED)   |     | J.M.F.   | 5 | 1  |
|   | -J- |          |   |    |
| Jesus Saving, Not Begging (TVE)   |     | R.R.C.H. | 8 | 12 |
| Joy's Of Winter For A Kindergarten Teacher, The                                   |     | K.V.W.   | 9 | 8  |
|   | -L- |          |   |    |
| Learning From A Tragedy   |     | R.G.     | 3 | 18 |
| Living Together (Crit)  |     | B.W.     | 9 | 6  |
| Look At Teenage Drinking, A (Crit)  |     | B.W.     | 6 | 4  |
|   | -M- |          |   |    |
| Mother's Influence In The Home, The   |     | M.D.V.   | 3 | 4  |
| My New Pastoral Work  |     | R.M.D.V. | 6 | 6  |
|   | -N- |          |   |    |
| Newness of Life (ED)  |     | D.H.     | 9 | 1  |
|   | -O- |          |   |    |
| Our Joy Is In Jesus First   |     | R.J.     | 9 | 3  |
|   | -P- |          |   |    |
| Palm Sunday   |     | C.V.D.T. | 2 | 5  |
| Passover, The (PS)  |     | R.G.L.   | 7 | 14 |
| Passover Both Sacrifice and Sacrament, The (PS)                                   |     | R.G.L.   | 9 | 15 |
| Place of The Single Woman in the Church<br>and in The Community of Believers, The |     | M.H.K.   | 4 | 8  |
| Preparing To Comfort  |     | H.O.     | 5 | 24 |
| Proof of Discipleship, A  |     | B.W.     | 3 | 5  |
|   | -Q- |          |   |    |
| Quarter of Earth in Deadly Conflict (Crit)  |     | A.L.     | 2 | 16 |
|   | -R- |          |   |    |
| Rev. Moore's Mailbox  |     | R.R.G.M. | 3 | 16 |
| Rev. Moore's Mailbox  |     | R.R.G.M. | 4 | 16 |
| Rev. Moore's Mailbox  |     | R.R.G.M. | 6 | 9  |
| Rev. Moore's Mailbox  |     | R.R.G.M. | 8 | 16 |
| Rules For Daily Life (Poem) ( <b>Beacon Lights</b> Vol. 15 No. 2)                 |     |          | 4 | 22 |
|   | -S- |          |   |    |
| Springtime (Poem)   |     | S.K.     | 2 | 12 |
|   | -T- |          |   |    |
| The Bible: One Whole Truth (TVE)  |     | R.R.C.H. | 1 | 10 |
| Thoughts Concerning Pastoral Care   |     | R.W.B.   | 7 | 11 |
| Thoughts on Prayer (ED)   |     | H.L.     | 1 | 1  |
| Thoughts on Our Worship—The Apostle's Creed                                       |     |          | 4 | 10 |
| Thoughts on Our Worship—Prayers   |     |          | 5 | 9  |
| Thoughts on Our Worship—Preaching   |     |          | 7 | 11 |
| Thoughts on Our Worship—The Reading of The Law                                    |     |          | 3 | 14 |
| Thoughts on Our Worship—Singing   |     |          | 2 | 11 |
| Thoughts on Our Worship—The Votim   |     |          | 1 | 8  |
| Two Natures (Poem)  |     | C.F.     | 7 | 13 |



|                                    |     |        |   |    |
|------------------------------------|-----|--------|---|----|
| Untouched (Poem)                   | -U- | S.L.   | 9 | 10 |
|                                    |     |        |   |    |
| Vocation in The State Police       | -V- | P.B.   | 1 | 16 |
| Voice From Within The G.L.T.S., A  |     | R.M.K. | 5 | 3  |
|                                    |     |        |   |    |
| What A Friend                      | -W- | H.L.   | 7 | 1  |
| What Are Young People's Societies? |     | J.S.   | 3 | 15 |
| What Do We Owe Our Country?        |     | R.G.   | 6 | 19 |
| What Do You Think? (ED)            |     | D.H.   | 3 | 1  |
| Who Are My Friends? (PS)           |     | R.G.L. | 3 | 11 |
|                                    |     |        |   |    |
| Young People of Jamaica, The       | -Y- | R.K.B. | 4 | 4  |

## Authors' Key

|          |                   |          |                   |
|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| A.L.     | Agatha Lubbers    | M.M.     | Marjorie Martin   |
| B.D.D.   | Brian D. Dykstra  | M.P.D.   | Mrs. P. Dykstra   |
| B.W.     | Ben Wigger        | P.B.     | Paul Bruckbauer   |
| C.F.     | Clara Fennema     | P.S.     | Pete Schipper     |
| C.M.     | Carolyn Moore     | R.G.     | Randy Groenendyk  |
| C.V.B.   | Carolyn Van Baren | R.J.     | Rachel Jansma     |
| C.V.D.T. | Char Van Den Top  | R.K.B.   | Rev. K. Brown     |
| D.D.     | Don Doezema       | R.W.B.   | Rev. W. Bruinsma  |
| D.H.     | Dave Harbach      | R.M.D.V. | Rev. M. De Vries  |
| D.Hu.    | Duane Huisken     | R.R.F.   | Rev. R. Filkkema  |
| F.Q.     | Francis Quek      | R.R.C.H. | Rev. R.C. Harbach |
| H.L.     | Harry Langerak    | R.M.K.   | Rev. M. Kamps     |
| H.O.     | Herman Ophoff     | R.D.K.   | Rev. D. Kuiper    |
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| J.S.     | Jim Schipper      | R.R.M.   | Rev. R. Miersma   |
| K.V.W.   | Kathi Vander Wiel | R.V.     | Rev. Veldman      |
| L.F.     | Linda Feenstra    | R.V.B.   | Rev. Van Baren    |
| M.D.V.   | Mrs. De Vries     | S.K.     | Sherry Kooile     |
| M.H.K.   | Miss H. Kuiper    | S.L.     | Sue Looyenga      |

|      |                           |
|------|---------------------------|
| CEC  | Current Events & Comments |
| Crit | Critique                  |
| ED   | Editorial                 |
| PS   | From The Pastor's Study   |
| TVE  | Truth vs. Error           |



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